

CHANDAMAMA

MAY 1980

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Turn to Page 33
for the story of
"THE PENSIVE PRINCE"



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thirsty people.
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The Name That Came To Mean Emperor

Julius Caesar, the leader of Rome, had a great desire to be crowned emperor. But before his desire had been fulfilled, he was killed by the members of the Roman Senate (Parliament).

But his desire found fulfilment in his adopted son, Octavian. He drove away or defeated Caesar's foes and assumed the name, Augustus Caesar. His successors too were called Caesars. By and by Caesar came to mean emperor.

The Russian emperors became known as Czars; the German emperors were Kaisers. Even the British monarch bore the title, "Kaiser-i-Hind", meaning Emperor of India. These terms were derived from Caesar.

Thus, though Caesar could not become an emperor, his name became the proud decoration for so many emperors of so many dynasties!



PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST



Mr. M. Natarajan



Mr. Devidas Kasbaker

Can you formulate a caption in a few words, to suit these pictures related to each other? If yes, you may write it on a post card and mail to Photo Caption Contest, Chandamama, to reach us by 20th of the current month. A reward of Rs .25/- will go to the best entry which will be published in the issue after the next.

The Prize for the March '80 goes to:

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The Winning Entry - 'Piper in the Making' — 'Drummer in the Offing'



PICKS FROM
OUR MAIL BAG

Dear Sir,

My teachers, my friends, and myself are very much fascinated by the feature, "Memorable Moments from History." They are far more interesting than stories and yet true! But will you mind informing us the source from which you are reproducing them? There must be some book like *Believe it or Not*. We wish to get it.

Roma Trivadi, Lucknow

Your editors take pains to cull those true episodes from a large number of sources—all works of history, of course. They are exclusive to the readers of the *Chandamama* and they have not been published in the form of a book.

—The Publisher

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SWAYAMVAR

Ram and Lakshman, the two worthy sons of Seth Ratanlal are out to accomplish their mission.

Ram finds his way into Durgadevi's household as a servant. Soon he finds his way into Shanthi's heart too. While promptness and smartness in work make him indispensable to Durgadevi, his simplicity and sincerity endear him to Shanthi.

And a stage comes when he is in a position to give this ultimatum to Durgadevi: either Shanthi becomes his bride, or he leaves!

Durgadevi, for whom Shanthi was no more than a maid-servant, lets them marry, for it suits her interest.

In the meanwhile, Lakshman has

arrived in the town with a bang! He is given out as a prince. His munificence, matched by his personal charm, casts a spell on Rupa. Surely, it would be hard for even the proud Durgadevi to find a more eligible match for her beloved daughter! Resistance offered by the poor Makhanlal is of no avail. The marriage is celebrated on a grand scale.

Their goals achieved, should the two brothers reveal their identity? Not yet. Atleast Lakshman has a challenging task ahead. The pampered Rupa must be taught the realities of life; her love must stand the test of ordeals!

.....to be continued



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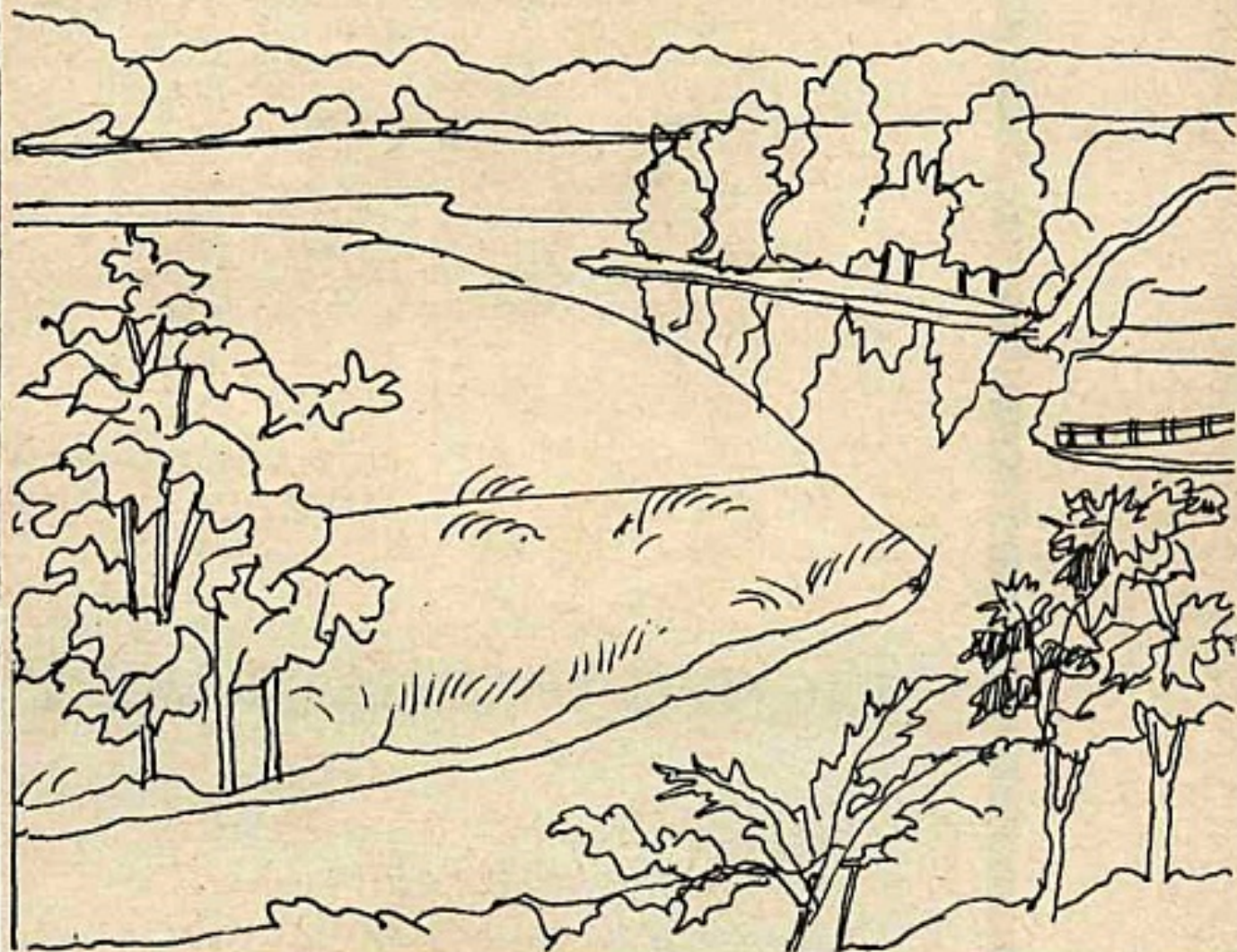
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CONTEST NO. 14

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PLUS NINE STORIES AND
SEVEN OTHER FEATURES

GOLDEN WORDS OF YORE

अप्रियाण्यपि कुर्वाणो यः प्रियः प्रिय एव सः ।

दग्धमन्दिरसारेऽपि कस्य बह्नावनादराः ॥

*Apriyāṇyapi kuroāṇo yaḥ priyaḥ priya eva saḥ
Dagdhamandirasāre'pi kasya vahnāvanādarah*

One who is dear to us remains dear even if he (or she) does something unpleasant. We are not displeased with fire even though it destroyed our wealth.

The Hitopadeshah



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Founder: CHAKRAPANI

Controlling Editor: NAGI REDDI

STORY OF BUDDHA

The publication of this number of your magazine coincides with the *Buddha Purnima* – the day of the Buddha's birth, enlightenment as well as his *Nirvana*—according to legends.

And, on this occasion, we are happy to bring to you the events of the Buddha's early days – in the series, *The Story of India*.

The Buddha preached the principles through which one could free oneself from the cycle of birth and death. These principles as well as the general code of conduct he gave for the people to follow became a religion – Buddhism. While in the previous issue we have already shown the great impact Buddhism had on India and countries beyond – how the mighty conqueror Asoka turned a champion of peace—we begin now giving you the glimpses of the life of the Buddha, to spread over a few forthcoming issues. Battles, conquests and other similar upheavals mark one line of events, while spiritual quest and achievements form another line of events—indispensable for understanding the spirit of India. Hence our effort to present both the lines of developments.



LET US KNOW

Will the heart and the brain transplant experiments affect the traditional religious attitudes?

*Mrs. M. Paranjoti,
Kakinada.*

Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of religious attitudes. The popular religious attitude is based on dogmas and rituals and is often associated with superstitions. Such a religious attitude gets offended whenever a novel discovery or revelation is made.

But religion at its best is spirituality; man's quest for truth. The creation is filled with many a mystery. To come across a new mystery or to solve it means knowing a new aspect of God. The true religious attitude ought to welcome any human achievement, scientific or cultural.

But so far as a medical achievement like the heart transplant is concerned, even the popular religious attitude has little reason to feel concerned. Take the case of the Hindu religion. If the Puranic story of an elephant's head being transplanted on Ganesha when he loses his original head is accepted as a welcome device, there is no reason why a modern transplant should offend one's religious attitude. The original series of the *Twenty-five Tales of King Vikram and the Vampire* includes a significant story: A girl's husband and brother both lie beheaded. The girl is asked by the goddess Kali to join their heads and bodies and sprinkle holy water on them. The girl does so. The two youths return to life. But, the girl, in her haste, had put her husband's head on her brother's body and *vice versa*. To the vampire's question whom should she look upon as her husband, the king's answer is, the youth with her husband's head - for it is the head that determines one's personality.

The Seat of the Sages

"Night halt at Rishikesh? Does this mean, Uncle, that we are going farther up the hills?" Ravi asked Mr. Singh.

Mr. Singh gave a mysterious smile. But the Sadhu who had become his friend, revealed to the boys that they intended visiting Badrinath!

"Badrinath! How exciting! But how can we go there?" asked Ravi.

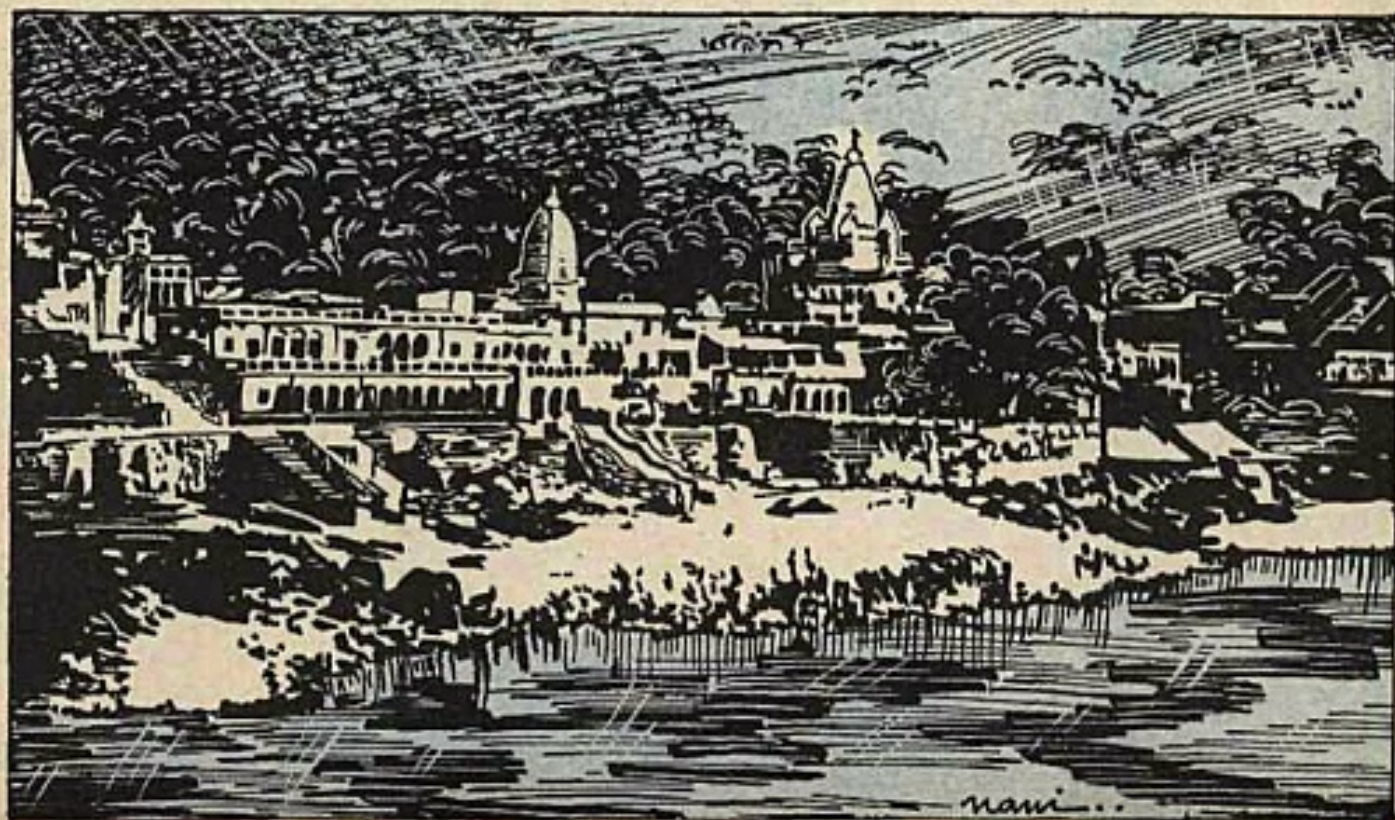
"You are thinking of snow, are you? Well, it is true that the place becomes inaccessible from November. It opens for visitors

in the middle of May. We are on time," explained the Sadhu.

Ravi and Raman exchanged joyous looks and smiles.

Their bus was rolling forward through lush green valleys of the Ganga. Hamlets and fields and forests disappeared like pictures.

It was a serene afternoon when they entered Rishikesh, 24 kilometres from Hardwar. To their right flowed the holy river in her quiet majesty. Rishikesh had been the seat of so many sages through the ages. There



were so many Ashrams, big and small, scattered in the holy place.

"Where do you wish to pass your night—at Kali Kamli Wale's or at the guest house of Sivananda Ashram?" asked the Sadhu.

The boys had read about Swami Sivananda who had founded his Ashram at Rishikesh. But who was Kali Kamli Wale? They were curious.

The Sadhu narrated the story of Swami Vishudhanand: Till a few years ago a journey to Badrinath or Kedarnath was an extremely arduous task. The Swami, while meditating on a hill, heard a voice which directed

him to create as much facility as possible for the pilgrims. The Swami travelled to Calcutta. Under some weird inspiration he placed an earthen pot on his head with burning coals in it. He went from merchant to merchant, appealing to them to contribute to his mission. He did not give up the practice of carrying the pot—a strange feat—until he had collected a handsome amount.

The Swami used to don a black blanket and was popularly called Kali Kamli Wale—the man with the black blanket. He opened a number of rest houses along the roads to Badrinath and Kedarnath and his mission



helped the travellers in several other ways.

Mr. Singh had already wired to an inmate of the Sivananda Ashram. Accommodation had been reserved for his party in the Ashram's guest house.

It was yet to get dark. The Sadhu was an enterprising man. He met a pilgrim who had a car. He arranged for the party to have a brief trip to Lakshman Jhoola, a holy spot that was close by.

"Lakshmana, the younger brother of Rama, had built the bridge across the Ganga river!" informed the Sadhu.

"But it seems to be quite modern, made of metal that

could not have been available to Lakshmana!"

The Sadhu agreed with the observation of Raman. "There was a rope bridge. There must have been several, one replacing another. This one of course is a recent thing. But this too is sacred because this is a successor to the bridge Lakshmana had built," the Sadhu said.

A primeval silence seemed to prevail on the other side of the river—the hills shrouded by wood. One could feel in that silence a spirit that was awful and lofty.

Darkness was slowly descending on the region.



THREE PRINCESSES

9

(The three brothers in search of the lost princesses cross a fearful forest and enter an enchanted castle. There they meet the three princesses, but do not know how to rescue the princesses and themselves from the giant's hold.)

Turned into Statues!

The three brothers stood invisible and saw the activities of the giant. He strolled along the bank of the lake and whistled. His whistling, of course, sounded like a cyclonic wind passing through a gorge. Although he tried to look merry, his face betrayed his anger at having lost trace of the three brothers.

The swans of the lake remained huddled together in a corner of the lake. The giant counted them again and gain. Obviously, he was not good at arithmetic. At the middle of his counting he forgot the number several times and began again with number one.

As it grew dark, the giant sprawled with his head inside the castle and the body extending to the garden on the lake. His snoring was like the rumbling of thunder. At times he rolled and kicked on the ground.

Perhaps some bad dream disturbed his peace.

A weird moon shone over the forest. The invisible brothers very much wished to grow visible and beckon the three princesses, now turned into swans, ashore. But they did not know how deep the giant's sleep was. They kept their desire under check and let the hours of the desolate night pass in silence.

With the sunrise the giant sat up. He made some strange noise while stretching his limbs. Soon the brothers understood that the giant was humming a tune. The noise was really fearful.

Soon the giant raised a shrill cry and changed into a vulture and flew away. The invisible brothers, to their great joy, saw three swans breaking away from their flock and swimming to-

wards the shore.

The brothers grew visible and stood ready to welcome the princesses. The swans, with their help, came upon the ground and got back their real forms.

The princesses giggled as the brothers narrated the giant's snoring, kicking, and singing. "Till this day," said Subhasini, "everything concerning the giant only terrified us. We could never dream of laughing at him!"

"Your presence, indeed, has brought such a change in our mood!" observed Subhasini, casting a grateful look at the

three young men.

"But even now we ought to think twice before laughing full-throated," remarked Sukeshini.

"It is so," agreed Subhasini.

"We were discussing the possibility of entering the underground castle of the giant. Since you say that the magic powders which make us invisible and visible won't work there..."

Before Udayan could complete his sentence, the girls looked upward. There was panic in their faces.

"Grow invisible, at once!" they whispered. Next moment they had jumped into the lake and changed into swans.





But lost in merry conversation, Udayan had not kept the necessary powder handy. He was still trying to identify the one that would make them invisible when a sudden gust almost swept them off their feet.

The vulture changed into a giant even before touching the ground. With a swift swing of his hand, he caught hold of the three brothers in his single grip.

"Ha ho!" he laughed. Then he growled out his question, "Who are you? What made you come here?"

The suddenness of the danger had dazed the brothers. But in no time they gathered their

wits and showed as if there was nothing unusual in the situation!

"How short is your memory!" commented Udayan.

"Who are you to criticise my memory? You have trespassed into my compound. You are my prisoners. I have every right to ask you what brought you here—and when!" roared out the giant.

"We have a right to criticise your memory because we have already answered all these questions!" shouted Nishith in a stern voice.

"That is right. It seems you have failed to recognise us!" added Kumar.

"Ha ho!!"

The laughter came from behind them. Surprised, the three brothers, still in the giant's grip, looked back. What should they see but another giant walking in their direction.

"The fault is not with him, you impudent chaps, it is with you. The one who should recognise you is here. The one who holds you now is my brother—my elder brother. You should be respectful to him."

The brothers looked once at their captor's face and once at the other's. They now realised

that so far they had taken for granted that there was only one giant they had to deal with while there were two—at least two!

"I don't believe that anybody would take the trouble of coming all the way to my secret abode just for fun! Why did you come here, hiding?" demanded the elder giant.

"We didn't come hiding! We came riding horses and anybody having eyes could see us!" said Udayan spiritedly.

"Well, brother, leave them to me. You better go on your mission. We must have three more young men or women before long," suggested the younger giant.

"All right; but don't take any chance with these intruders. Do to them as you have done to others," said the elder giant, putting his captives down. Then he gave out a shout and was seen shivering. In the twinkling of an eye he changed into a vulture and flew away, his giant wings shattering some of the branches of the trees.

The younger giant led the brothers into his castle and ordered them to sit down.

"Look here, fellows, you tricked out the magic towel and



those powders of the dwarf wizard. That was a crime for which you deserve severe punishment. Surrender them to me at once. Come on!" he bellowed.

The brothers looked at one another. Then Udayan quietly brought out the things demanded and placed them before the giant.

"Never—never—never had anybody deceived me as you did. I have not slept properly—have not eaten properly. I'm hungry—hungry—hungry!"

The giant yelled partly with anguish and partly with joy as he spread the magic towel before



him. Then he wished for as many fruits and roots he could remember. They popped up on the towel. With great concentration he gorged on them.

"Have some," he said when he had satisfied himself, pushing the towel towards his prisoners.

The three brothers too were hungry. They made good use of the remaining fruits and felt thankful to the giant.

They felt even more thankful to him when he proposed to go and fetch water for them to drink. They wished that he left the magic powders behind him so that they could become invisible. But the giant was not

that naive. He tightly bound their hands with strong strings of rope.

When he returned with water, the brothers had begun to doubt his motive. But they were feeling thirsty and the giant threatened to crush them if they did not open their mouths.

They were obliged to gulp the water. Next moment they turned into statues.

* * * * *

While the princesses and the three brothers were having such strange experiences in the castle of the giant, King Sudharma and his queen were passing extremely anxious days. The king had occupied the topmost room of his palace. He spent the greater part of his time gazing at the horizon. What happened to his daughters? What happened to those brave young men who went in search of them? These questions worried him constantly.

His astrologers of course assured him time and again that wherever the princesses might be, they were alive. But such assurances gave the king only temporary solace. His spirit slumped as soon as the astrologers took leave of him.

This is about the king. The

condition of the queen can be well imagined. She rarely talked to anybody, hardly stopped weeping and sighing. The whole palace remained plunged in gloom.

One day, at the sunset hour, the king saw two riders galloping towards the palace. He went out to the terrace and observed the riders. Before he could recognise them he had recognised the horses. They were two of the three horses given to Udayan, Kumar and Nishith.

Were they coming back to report to him the failure of their mission? The question upset the king so much that he walked up to the brink of the terrace, unconscious of the danger of a

fall. He would have fallen to his death had not a bodyguard held him back on time.

It was found out that the riders were two roving sepoys of the king. They had found the abandoned horses on the outskirts of the forest.

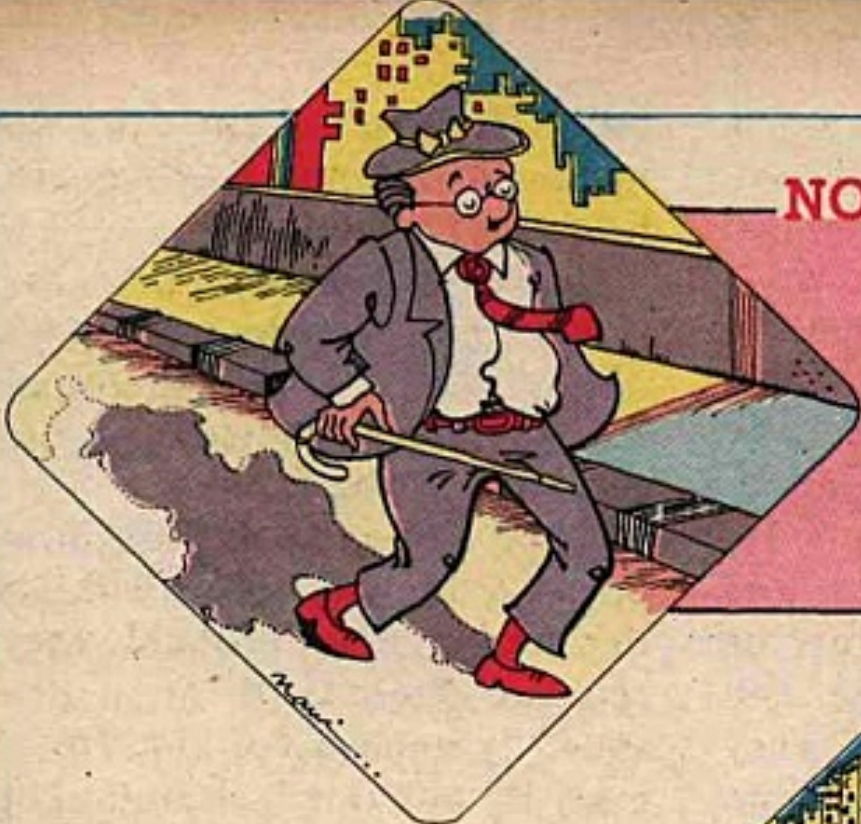
"God alone knows how those boys are moving about without the horses. Most probably they too are kidnapped or imprisoned by some evil power. However, let not this leak out. Let not the queen hear that the horses which bore those brave boys had been found without the riders," said the king.

Nevertheless, the news reached the queen. She swooned away.

(To continue)




WAYS OF THE WORLD NOT SO FORGETFUL

A diamond-shaped illustration of a man in a grey suit, red tie, and a small hat with a bow. He is walking on a sidewalk, leaning on a cane. In the background, there is a cityscape with yellow buildings.

In the beautiful city of
Bombay
Lived a gentleman called
Professor Lombay
He thought and thought
But his thoughts he forgot
That absent-minded Pro-
fessor Lombay of Bombay.

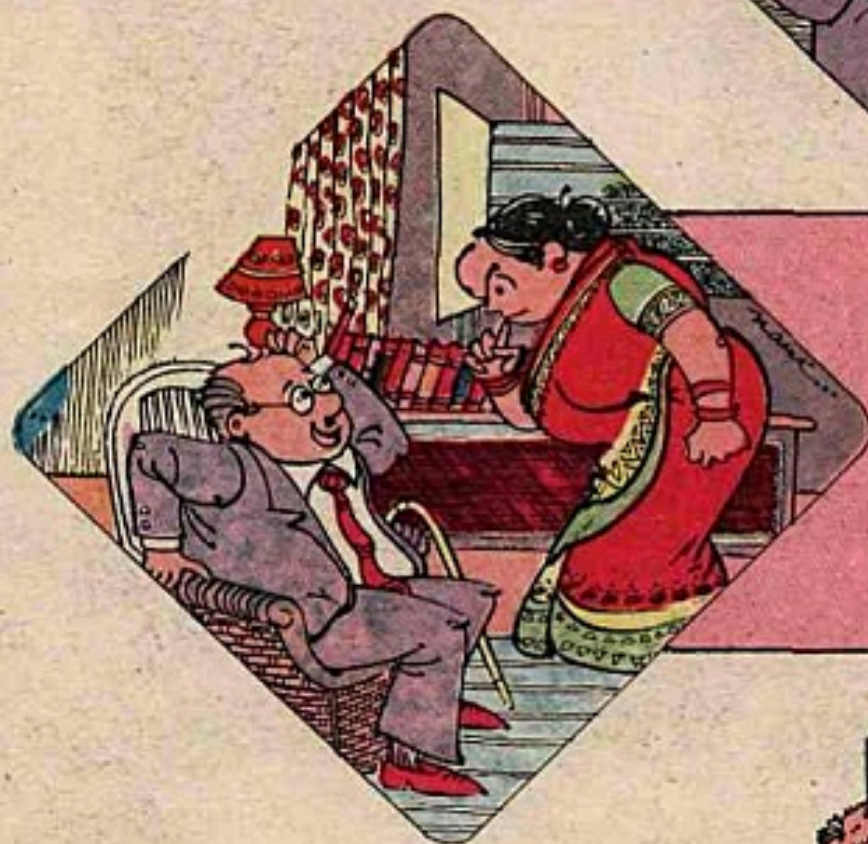
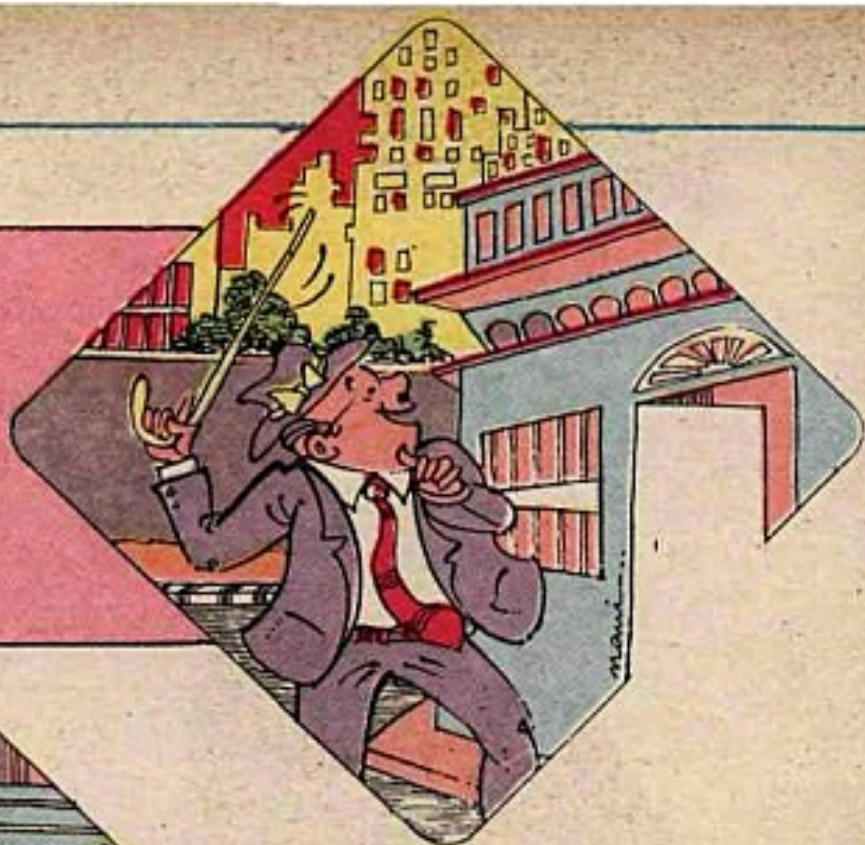
Once in the evening out
for a stroll
The professor wondered
what is soul

Through the Marine Drive
He made a walking dive
Quite into the sea, forget-
ful of all.

A diamond-shaped illustration showing a group of people on a beach. A man in a red shirt is helping the professor, who is sitting on the ground. Other people are looking on. The background shows a city skyline.

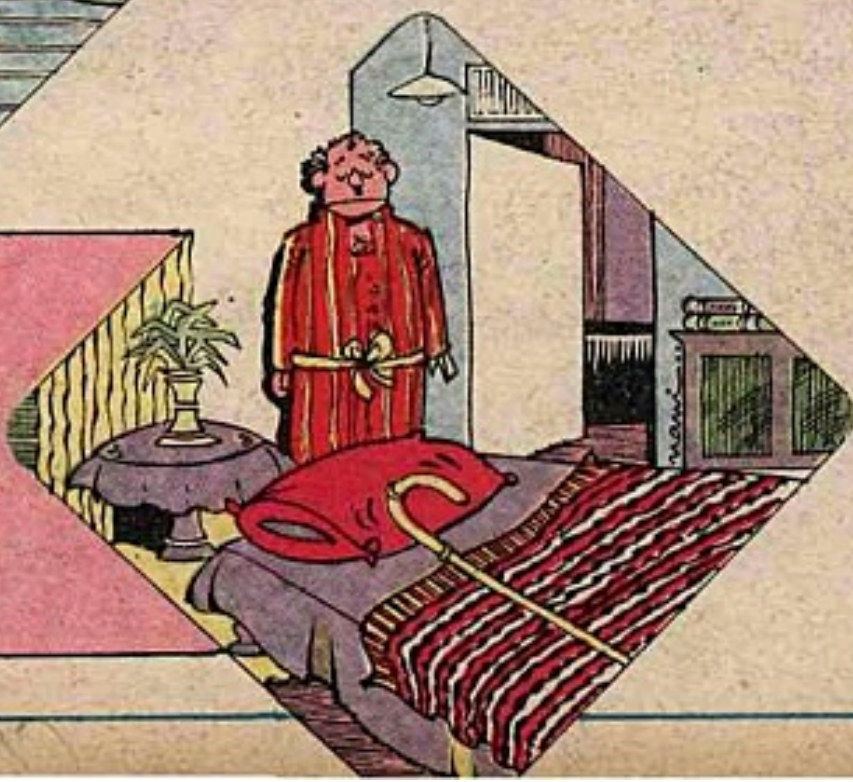
Good people rescued him
and put him on the road
The professor thanked
them with smiles broad
Soon did he forget
How he got wet
And said, "It must have rai-
ned to leave me so cold!"

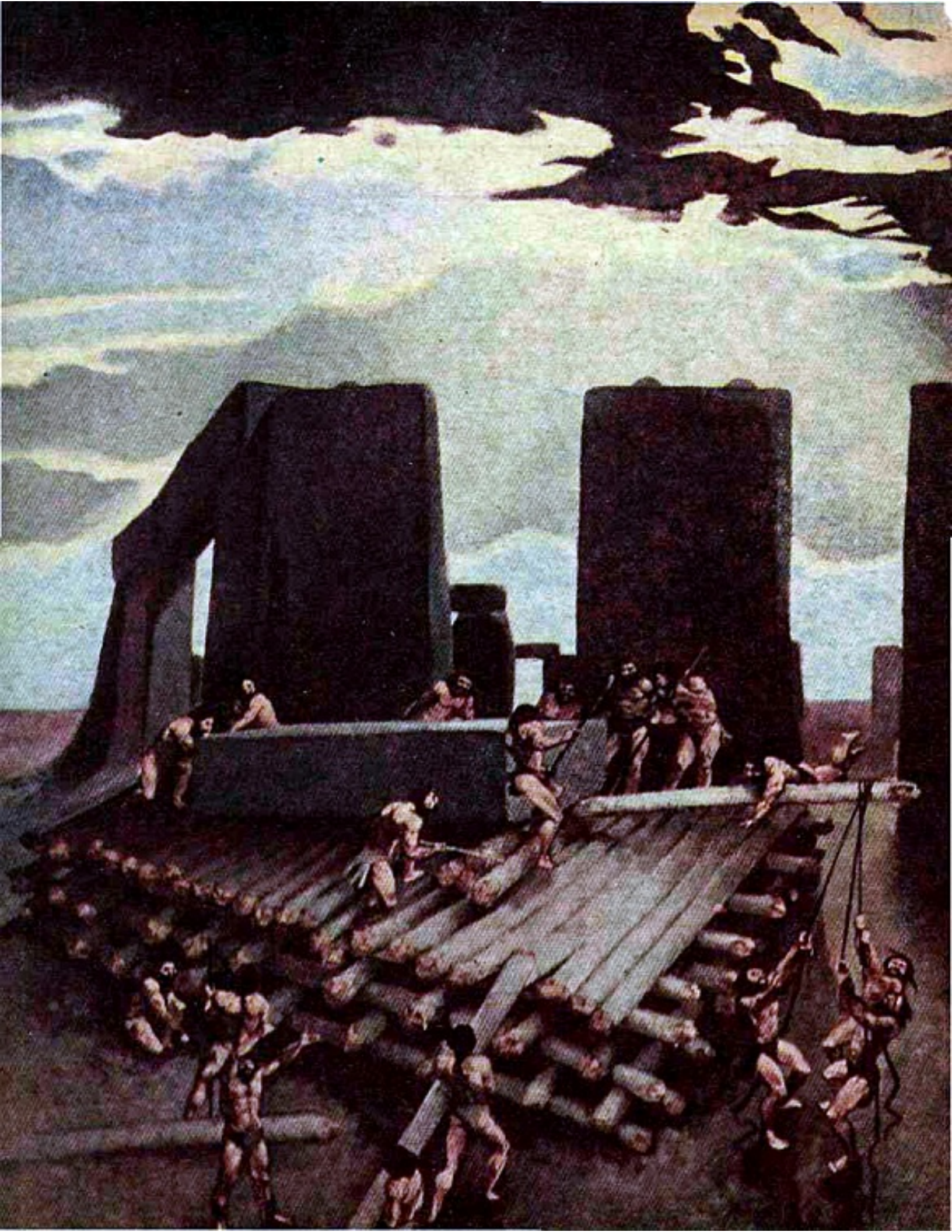
He said before a house at
the end of a street
"How much this resembles
my own home sweet!"
With a shrill shout
His wife spoke out,
"This is your own home,
how'd you forget?"



Said the professor with a
smile that was pure,
"I'm not so forgetful as to
deserve censure,
I can remember
Who you are
You are - eh - eh - eh -
my wife, I'm sure!"

Deciding to lie down, for,
he felt sick,
Into his bedroom the pro-
fessor did creep,
But quietly he laid
His walking stick on bed
And stood against the
wall thinking that he was
the stick.





Riddle Of The Standing Stones

On the plains of Salisbury, England, stand some monumental stones, known as Stonehenge. Who built them?

Most people who see Stonehenge for the first time are reminded of the ancient priests, called Druids, and the human sacrifice they practised.

There are certain things that people want to believe. So far as Stonehenge is concerned, even if it is hard to prove that the Druids actually used the place, it is equally hard to prove that they did not.

The eerie circle of stones in Wiltshire that has long been a major tourist attraction still remains an unsolved mystery.

Stonehenge is to be found on the edge of Salisbury plain. Seen from the roadway on a fine day, Stonehenge may not look very impressive. The stones are, in fact, about 4 metres high and weigh about 25 tonnes. Seen on an overcast day, or through the swirling mist that is quite common in these parts, Stonehenge immediately looks as sinister as its reputation. One feels that literally anything

could have happened within that circle of stones.

This extraordinary monument built by the Neolithic man consists of an outer earthwork inside which are the remains of four series of stones!

It is quite certain that Stonehenge was not built all at once, and the labour involved in completing each part must have been immense. The earthwork alone probably required 30,000 man-hours of work, and almost certainly involved every able-bodied person living in the area.

Inside the earthwork a circle of pits was dug, 56 in all, and for a long time it was thought these held posts. Now it is clear that these holes, the "Aubrey Holes," as they are called, after their discoverer, contained human ashes which had been tied up in bags fastened with bone pins.

At a later date the bluestones were brought from the Prescelly Mountains. Later still other

stones were brought from Marlborough.

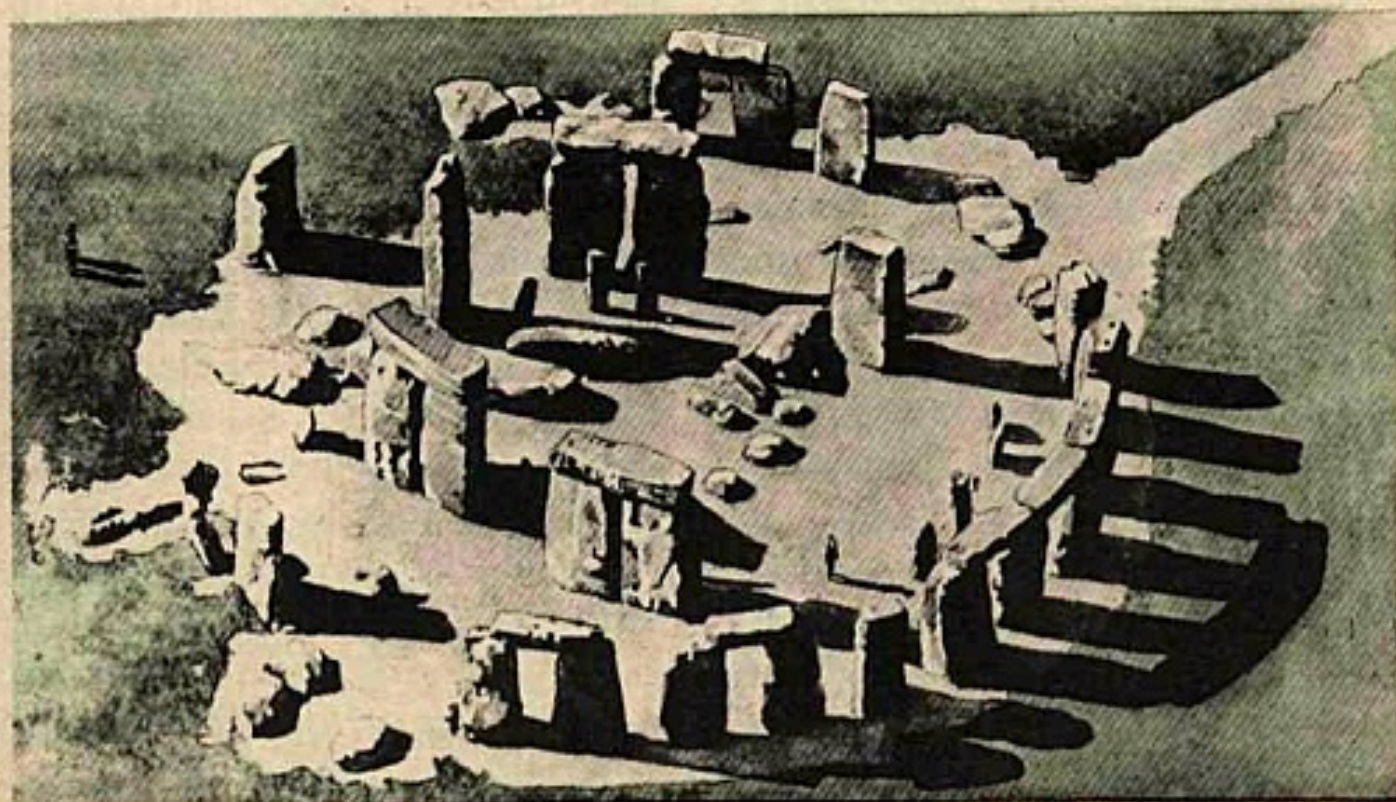
Why should the builders of Stonehenge have troubled to bring their building materials from such formidable distances? What justified spending a whole year hauling a single block of stone?

It was because Stonehenge was not just the burial place of a great chieftain, but served as a kind of cathedral-observatory. The great ring of stones was undoubtedly used for important religious ceremonies, but it is equally certain that it was used to record the rising of the sun and moon, probably for the purpose of keeping an accurate

calendar.

One cannot help wondering why the Britons of 4,000 years ago should have gone to such enormous trouble to measure the seasons accurately. The men who planned Stonehenge left no written records. Like most primitive farmers they would have attached great importance to certain rites and these would have taken place at the change of the seasons.

The ancient residents of Gaul (France) followed a religion known as Druidism. It seems to have consisted of beliefs drawn from all over the known world. When the Romans colonised Gaul they did their



best to suppress the Druid priests, claiming that their ceremonies were cruel and barbaric.

The Druids of Gaul lost their power under the Romans and became little more than communities of astrologers and sooth-sayers, mainly in Ireland and Wales. They got rough treatment in Britain. The Romans were usually very tolerant towards the religious beliefs of the people they conquered, but this tolerance did not apply to the British Druids.

They methodically wrecked Stonehenge, and the very fact that they did so seems to confirm that it had indeed been used by the hated sect.

The Romans did so much damage to Stonehenge that it is highly unlikely that anyone will ever discover exactly what it

looked like in its heyday.

Even after the Romans left Britain, the battered remains of Stonehenge were not allowed to rest in peace. During the Middle Ages the Church considered the monument to be a possible encouragement to pagan beliefs and damaged it still further. For hundreds of years travellers chipped off fragments of the stones as souvenirs.

During World War I the site just escaped being levelled to the ground, and it is only recently that Stonehenge has been given the protection it deserves. It is enough that it survives as a fascinating hint as to what it may once have been. What is left of it is a man-made marvel from the days before history began.

A novice was driving a car,
The fellow by his side said, "Sir
At this rate
We'd be late -
Drive faster!" - He did, and they are!

-Anon



WORTHY AND UNWORTHY

It was the time for the Caliph Harun al-Rashid to come out of his palace. He was to go for a royal stroll in one of his gardens.

A number of people stood outside the palace. Some were there to accompany the great ruler. They were his courtiers and that was their business. Some were there only to greet the Caliph with some flattering words. It always pays to appease the powerful. There were still others who were just

curious. They would marvel at the glittering robe and the jewelled turban of the ruler, his majestic personality, his well-trimmed beard, his impressive gait. Then they would go their way.

In the crowd was a man who did not belong to Bagdad, the Caliph's city, but had travelled there to meet him.

At last the Caliph came out. There were shouts of greetings and praise. The man who came



to meet him approached one of the Caliph's officers and asked if he could speak to the Caliph.

"Certainly not!" growled the officer.

"In that case, sir, will you be pleased to pass this on to the Commander of the Faithful?" the stranger said politely as he handed over a small packet to the officer.

Surprise was writ large on the officer's face when he saw what the packet contained. It was a precious ruby.

He pushed forward to the Caliph and presented the ruby to him. At once the Caliph's smile disappeared. "Where did you find this?" he asked the officer, looking grave.

"My lord, a stranger gave this to me with a request to hand this over to you," replied the officer.

The Caliph announced that he was not going to the garden. He asked the officer to bring the stranger to him and retired into the palace.

The stranger was duly produced before the Caliph. At the great ruler's query, the stranger narrated his story:

"My lord, I belong to Bassora. One day, recently, I was looking for a labourer. I



went to the city-square and found a handsome young man who appeared to be in need of food. I asked him if he would help me in building my house and, if he would, what is the wage he expected for a day's labour.

"He quoted his wage. I employed him. His sincerity and concentration charmed me. He stopped his work, with my permission, only twice during the day, for prayer. When it was evening, I told him that he had already done enough to earn his wage. But he worked on till it was night. I offered him a little more than his wage, for.



in truth, he had done more than what four men could have done. But he refused to accept the extra amount.

"I observed that he spent only a third of the money he got from me for buying food for himself. The remaining money he distributed as alms."

The Caliph listened to the stranger's narration with rapt attention. But all the while tears rolled down his cheeks. His wife had silently taken position behind him. She too was weeping. The stranger continued:

The next day I chanced upon the young man in a park. He

was lying alone. Not a soul was to be found nearby. I felt that there was something unusual about him. He was so pure, so good! I sat down by his side and asked him if I could help him in any way. 'Yes', he said. 'Come here tomorrow by this time. You shall find me dead. Say your prayers by me and give me a burial. You shall find something in my pocket. Please carry that to the Caliph, Harun al-Rashid.' I was extremely pained. I went to the park the next day and, alas, found him dead. I buried him and brought to you what I found in his pocket."

The Caliph broke down. His wife rolled on the floor and swooned away. Maids carried her away into her apartment. To the perplexed stranger, the Caliph then said, "My friend, the young man whom you buried was my son!"

He then narrated in brief how the prince, from his early childhood, refused to take part in the merriments that mark the life of a prince. He was given to brooding in silence for hours and muttering strange words. He would visit the graveyard of his forefathers and observe, 'How proud were these men!

But all their pride and power, could not save them from death!

"He often left the city and wandered here and there. I had asked his mother to give him this ruby so that in case he needed money while on his journey, he could sell it. But I was not happy with him. I thought that he disgraced me by his conduct. His dress and manners were unworthy of a prince.

"One day I saw him in our garden loitering like a good-for-nothing fellow. I told him that he was unworthy of the position of my son! He did not answer back immediately, but looking at a flying bird, he said, 'Bird,

will you alight on my hand?'

"Lo and behold, the bird made a dive and sat on his stretched palm. He then asked it to go and sit on the top of a tree. The bird obeyed him. 'Will you please alight on the hand of the Caliph, the Commander of the Faithful?' next he asked the bird. But this time the bird flew away.

"My son looked at me and asked me, 'Who was unworthy, myself or yourself?' I kept quiet. That is the last time I saw him."

The Caliph broke down again. The stranger stood amazed. "The great Caliph—so powerful—so wealthy—so generous—has such a sorrow to suffer!" he murmured.



SANCTION OBTAINED

Two thieves were passing by a village. One of them entered a hermit's hut and came out with a plate.

"Is it not a great sin to steal a hermit's property?" asked the second thief.

The first one thought for a while and then said, "Let me obtain the hermit's sanction for it."

The hermit was then seated under a tree. The thief bowed to him and said, "I must confess that I have stolen a plate."

"Return it to its owner. That will free you from your sin," said the hermit.

"Please allow me to give it to you," said the thief.

"No, I won't have it. Give it to its owner," said the hermit.

"What if the owner does not accept it?" asked the thief.

"You can keep it in that case," answered the hermit.

"Thank you, holy man!" said the thief and he joined his friend.





THE FORTUNE-TELLER

Manikpur was a prosperous village. Most of the villagers were farmers. They kept busy when their fields demanded their attention. At other times they found relaxation in festivals and some such engagements.

Being simple-hearted men and women, they easily believed in wandering mendicants. Beggars too received alms to their satisfaction.

Outside the village there was a field. A weekly market was held there. There were a number of ready-made huts there which shop-keepers occupied only on the market days. Once a mendicant camped in one such hut. He had two disciples with him. They roamed about in the village and informed the people that the mendicant was an expert fortune-teller. They

narrated many anecdotes of his success with celebrities: how he predicted the death of a certain queen, how to a merchant who had lost his ship he told in which harbour his ship was, and so on and so forth.

The villagers flocked to meet the mendicant. The mendicant would take down a visitor's name on a scrap of paper and retire into another room. After a few minutes he would come out and narrate some incidents of the visitor's past.

The visitor would be impressed. The mendicant, before telling the visitor anything about his future, would realise his fees.

Nobody grudged giving him his fees. A holy man who could speak correctly about the past would of course be able to speak



correctly about the future!

The young Vinod had come to visit his uncle at Manikpur. He too paid a visit or two to the mendicant. But somehow he felt that the fellow was a false mendicant. The way the mendicant realised his fees appeared to him a business trick.

"Why does the holy man retire into another room after taking down a visitor's name?" he asked one of the two disciples of the holy man.

"How can he know the visitor's past or future unless he meditated on him?" said the disciple.

Instead of satisfying Vinod,

the answer aroused a keener curiosity in him.

That night he sat behind the hut, hiding in a pit. When all was quiet, he heard the inmates of the hut talking. He came crawling close to the hut and pressed his ear against it.

"More than half of the men of Manikpur have visited us already. It is time for you to begin paying trips to another village. Put on your disguise with care. You should look like real beggars. Secondly, try to collect more information about the events in the lives of as many villagers as you can," the 'mendicant' was heard telling his disciples.

Vinod now understood their method of action. He waited there till they fell asleep. He then crept into the hut and, after some search, found a notebook and some false beards. He slipped out with them.

Back at his uncle's, he lighted a candle and examined the notebook. It contained the names of most of the villagers. Against each name was jotted down some major events of his life—like his suffering from pox, his father's death, etc.

Vinod smiled and went to bed. In the morning, with some

of the villagers, he arrived at the mendicant's hut.

After the first visitor had told his name, the mendicant went in. But rather a long time passed, yet he did not come out. His disciples then announced that the mendicant had taken ill and that he would not be able to see visitors.

"But he looked quite hale and hearty!" exclaimed Vinod. He then pushed in right to the mendicant's presence.

"Don't vex me!" yelled the mendicant.

"Don't you worry, holy man! On your behalf I can tell these men the events of their past. So far as their future is concerned, well, I can't say anything. It is different with you. Once you have foretold things, you will not be seen again. But I have to come here again and

again. They will take me to task if I bluff them," said Vinod.

Then he opened the notebook and read out the past events from the lives of those present.

The villagers stood bewildered. Vinod put an end to their bewilderment by bringing out those false beards and holding them up to the chins of the two disciples.

"These two fellows were visiting our village as beggars!" exclaimed the villagers.

More villagers gathered there. They took hold of the three cheats and handed them over to the police.

"My brothers, there may be astrologers who can predict your future. But they are rare. They won't come looking for you. You have to go looking for them," Vinod told the villagers.



Bandits Set to Run

A priest who performed some rites in the house of a generous landlord was returning with a rich gift. It was a gold necklace.

The road was lonely and it was night. Suddenly four bandits surrounded him.

The priest realised that to hide the ornament was impossible. To resist them would mean death.

He quietly opened the bundle and said with a sigh, "Let the looted thing go in loot!"

"Is it a looted thing?" asked the bandits.

"It has not been even ten minutes. I saw, at the turn of the road behind, a cart full of boxes of precious jewellery being looted by three or four bandits. They gave me this one so that I won't utter a word about their operation," said the priest.

The bandits forgot the priest's necklace and ran towards the turn of the road. The priest hurried to the nearest village and spent his night in a villager's house, safe with his wealth.



The Wicked too can Argue

Once, while passing by a forest, a kid-goat fell behind its tribe. It speeded up to reach its elders.

But it had to stop suddenly. To its right, on a rock, stood a tiger, ready to pounce upon it.

The kid-goat knew that it will be impossible to escape the tiger unless the tiger itself spared it.

"Good evening, Uncle Tiger, I am here just to greet you and convey to you the best wishes from my mother, I mean, your sister," said the kid-goat.

"Shut up!" roared out the

tiger. "Did you not just now step over my delicate tail? How dare you address me as Uncle? My tail is paining as it had never done. I am going to punish you for your offence!"

The kid-goat looked forward and backward. It saw no way to escape. Very politely he tried to argue with the tiger, "Great Beast! Am I not too small and light a creature to cause pain to your tail? Besides, your tail is behind you while I stand before you. How could



I step upon that?"

"Shut up, you impertinent one!" roared out the tiger again, advancing a little. "How dare you insult my tail? Is there a spot on earth which is not covered by my tail? You deserve to be punished—and punished with death—first for stepping on my tail and secondly for insulting it!"

The kid-goat saw that the tiger spoke no sense. In despair it tried to outwit it. "Tiger, sir, your huge tail might have covered the earth, but I was not anywhere on earth to touch it. I just dropped from the sky!" it said.

"Ha, ha! You have added yet

another point to your insult of my tail. As if you do not know that the whole sky is made of my tail!" said the tiger.

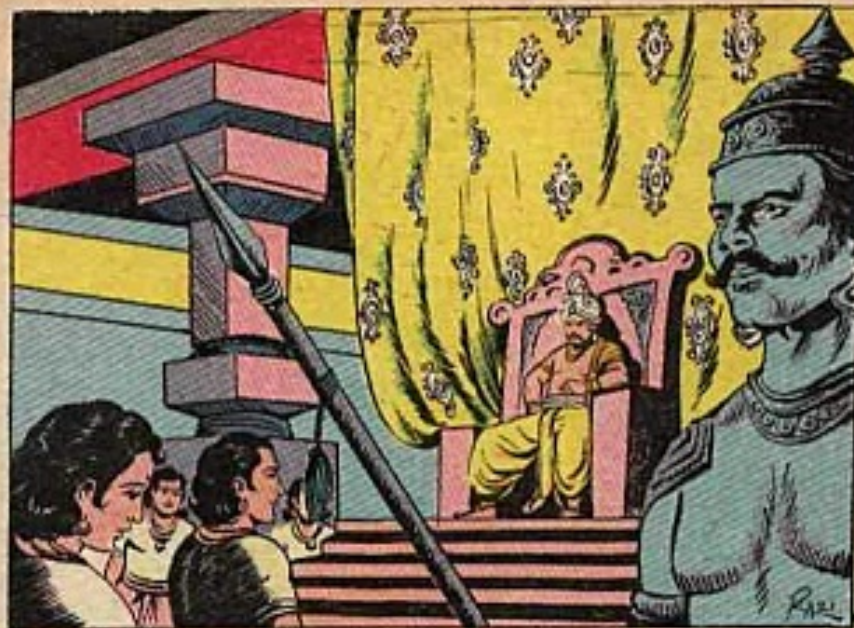
The kid-goat now felt convinced that nothing will save it. With tears rolling down its cheeks, it bleated out, "You wicked creature! Are you not ashamed of those tall claims about your tail? How foolish it was of me to try to please you and argue with you! You are bent upon eating me. I should have known that arguments come handy even to the wicked!"

The tiger pounced upon the kid-goat and killed it.

From The Buddha Jataka



THE PENSIVE PRINCE



Long long ago, King Okkaka ruled Saketa. He had four sons. But when his younger queen gave birth to a fifth son, he promised to grant her a boon. She demanded the kingdom for her son. When the four sons heard this, they readily left Saketa.

The four princes, accompanied by many soldiers, reached the foot of the Himalayas. Their father had wanted them to conquer a city and rule it. But they met a sage who advised them to found a new city. They agreed and settled down around the sage's hut.

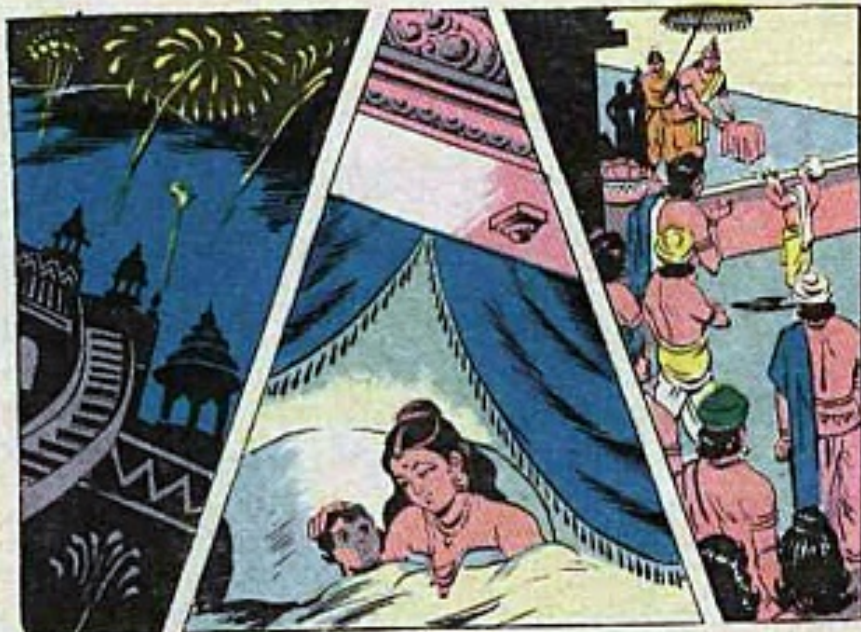


They named their settlement Kapilavastu, after the sage's name — Kapila. They came to be called the *Sakyas* because the place had once been full of Saka trees. Generations later Suddhodana was the king of that dynasty. One night his queen, Mayadevi, dreamt a white horse entering her body.



Astrologers said that this meant a great soul had entered the queen's womb. The queen wished to go to her parents' place. On her way she was relaxing in a garden called the Lumbini grove, holding onto a *Sal* branch, when she felt the pang that precedes childbirth.

The queen gave birth to a son in the grove. The mother and the son had to come back to Kapilavastu. The happy king ordered for festivities. But amidst the joys the queen breathed her last, leaving behind her the week-old child.



The prince was named Siddhartha—one who had achieved success in his pursuit. One day the little prince sat in the royal garden when a bird, struck by an arrow fell on his lap. He removed the arrow and nursed the bird. Soon there appeared his cousin, Devdutta.

"I hunted the bird down. Give it to me," Devdutta demanded. But Siddhartha refused to part with it. Both went to the king's court. "Who had the right to a creature—one who gives it death or one who gives it life?" asked Siddhartha. The ministers voted in his favour.



One day there was a ploughing festival. The young prince went out to see it. In the field he saw some farmers beating a snake to death! He realised that violence was the way of life in this world. He grew extremely pensive.

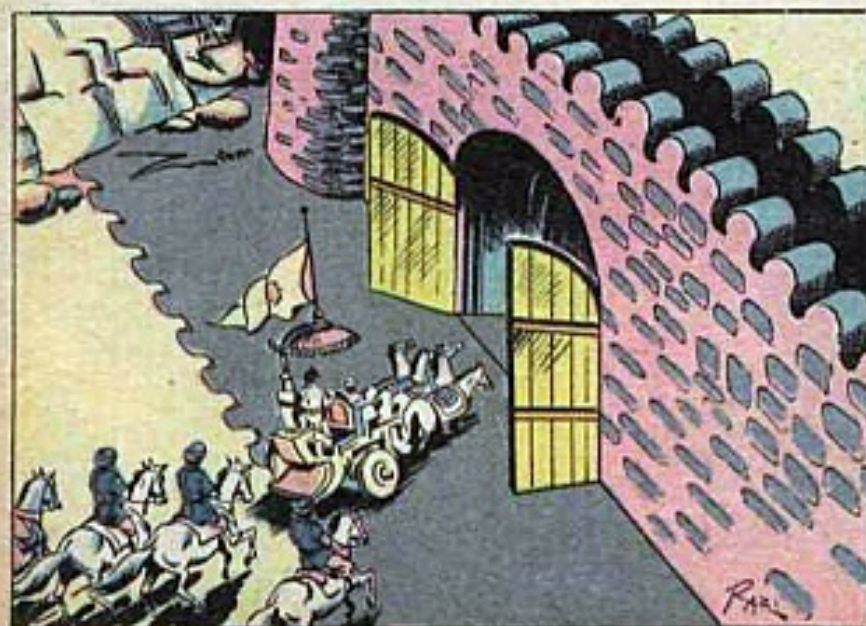
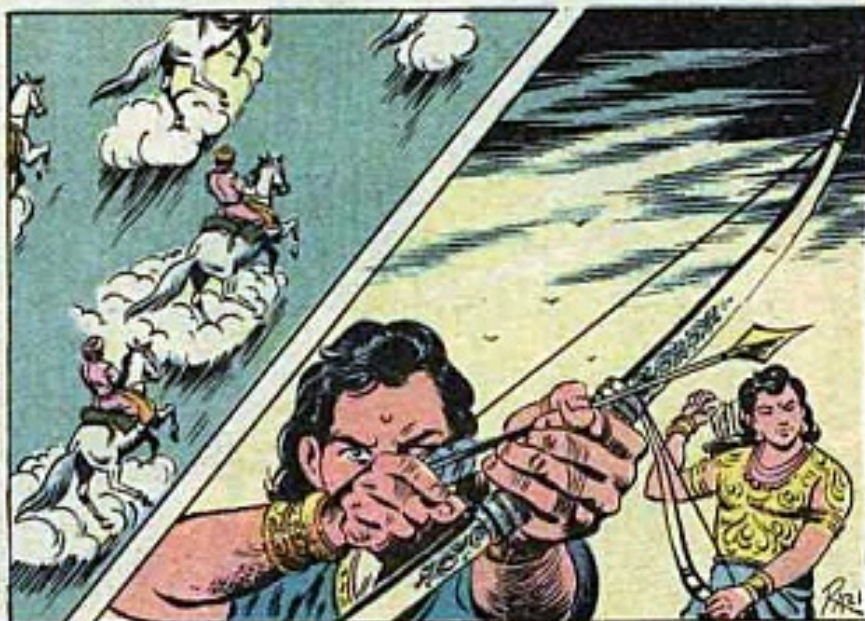
Siddhartha passed more and more of his time in meditating on the ways of the world. Must man put up with struggle and violence forever? Can the pleasures of life give real satisfaction to man? Does the human life have no other goal? - He wondered.





Astrologers said that the prince would become the king of kings if he stays at home. If not, he will become the Buddha—the Enlightened One. The king made three palaces for the prince—a marble one for summer, a wooden one for winter and a spacious one for the rains, and gave him all luxury.

Princess Yasodhara, the daughter of a chief, Suppabuddha, was famous for her beauty. Her father convened a Swayamvara for her. King Suddhodana sent Siddhartha to participate in it. There were several competitions among the assembled princes. Siddhartha surpassed all in every item.



Princess Yasodhara garlanded Siddhartha. Their marriage was solemnised. Siddhartha returned to his city with his bride. Kapilavastu celebrated the event on a grand scale. Suddhodana was at peace—sure that his son would never leave home.



THE GHOST'S FREEDOM

A certain burglar used to bury his booty under a tree. A spirit that lived in the tree thought, "The poor chap takes such pains to steal. I ought to safeguard his wealth!"

Accordingly he collected heavy boulders and heaped them around the tree. Nobody could go near it.

One day a hermit who was familiar with the road was passing by. He was surprised to see the road blocked.

"Who has done this?" he asked aloud.

"I, an honourable ghost. Now, don't come this way. A poor burglar buries his wealth here!" replied the spirit.

"I see! Who will be so sym-

pathetic towards a burglar if not a ghost!" said the hermit. He then uttered an incantation and tied the spirit to the tree.

Only then the spirit realised his folly. "Please show me some way to achieve my freedom!" he cried out.

The hermit did not seem to hear him. The imprisoned ghost cried out his appeal again and again. At last his howling moved the hermit. He stopped.

"You would be free only when the stones have been removed," said the hermit.

The ghost kept on appealing to the passers-by to remove the stones. But his eerie voice scared all. At last, however, a poor man paid attention to him.

The ghost requested him to remove the stones. In return for his labour, he could take out the buried wealth.

The poor man fetched a cart and removed the stones and carried the wealth home. The spirit was free. And no sooner was he free than he gathered the stones and blocked the road again!

A year later the hermit returned by the same road. He muttered to himself, "I see, the poor ghost has not yet found any body to remove the stones!"

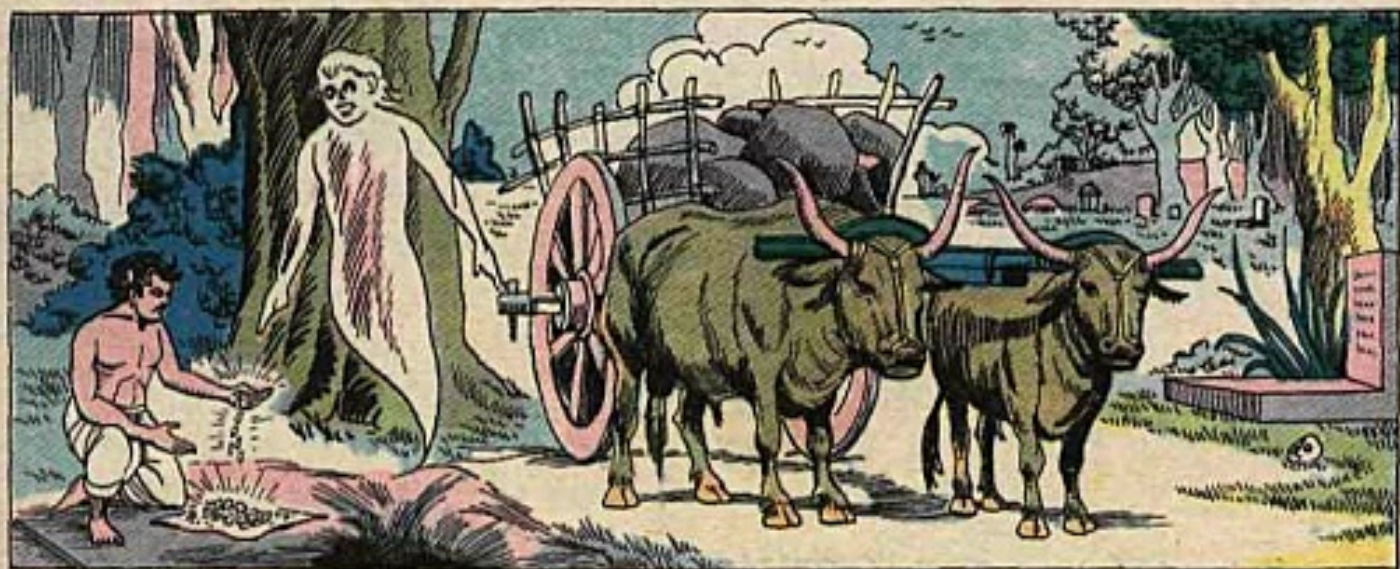
"Who says so? I got them removed and won my freedom. But I gathered them again when I was free!" proudly declared the ghost, not knowing who the passer-by was.

"I see!" said the hermit, "If this is how you use your free-

dom, you deserve to be tied to the tree again!" He chanted the necessary incantation and the ghost was a prisoner again.

The ghost now recognised the hermit. "Please, hermit," he cried, "tell me of some method by which I can be free!" But the hermit did not respond to him this time. The ghost kept on howling for a long time, but in vain. The hermit even did not look back.

However, unknown to the ghost, the hermit had provided for his relief. Years later the poor man who had become rich visited the place. He made a temple with those stones. That released the ghost from the curse. It is not known what he did with his freedom this time. He had to leave the place because he found it uncomfortable to live near a temple.





THREE REIGNS; THREE MOODS

One day the king of Vijaysagar asked his courtiers, "Who among you can tell me whether my reign is better than my father's and my grandfather's reigns or not?"

The king was whimsical and a tyrant. That is why nobody liked to answer his question. One who would say that his reign was better might be accused of insulting his father and grandfather. If the answer is otherwise, he might feel insulted himself. Silence on the part of the courtiers also might prove dangerous. The king might get annoyed.

"I have raised an excellent question, haven't I?" He complimented himself.

"My lord, who can surpass you in ideas?" said a flatterer. That quite inspired the king. "Come on, answer my question.

If an answer is to my satisfaction, the one to give the answer would not go unrewarded," declared the king.

The chief minister stood up. "My lord," he said, "most of these courtiers belong to your generation. How can they compare the three reigns?"

But once the king had asked a question, he could not leave it unanswered. "Get hold of somebody who has known all the three reigns," he ordered.

Sepoys fanned out in all directions looking for old people who had experienced the reigns of the two previous kings. But nobody was willing to make a statement before the king. Some people bribed the sepoy and turned them away. Some said that they lived in another kingdom earlier.

But the sepoy were afraid



that the king might take them to task if they did not produce someone who would answer the question. In a small lane lived an old man called Raghav. He was poor, but he was famous for his wit. They dragged him to the court.

"My lord," said Raghav, "I am too ignorant to answer your wise question. I can, however, narrate my personal experiences that might contain the answer."

Upon the king allowing him to narrate his story, he said: "I had an old neighbour during your grandfather's reign. He had a beautiful granddaughter. While dying he called me and

privately gave me five thousand rupees and said that I should arrange for his granddaughter's marriage after his death. Then he called his granddaughter and made her promise that she must obey me.

"A few years after the man's death I found out a nice young man for the girl and married her off. Also, I handed over the entire money to the couple.

"Some years ago, during your father's reign, once the young lady came to meet me. A thought came to me suddenly: What a fool I was to hand over the money to the couple! They did not know that the late old man had deposited it with me! I could have enjoyed the money myself!

"When I met the lady again only last year, that is, during your reign, I thought: What a fool I was to think that I could have kept only the money to myself! In spite of a big gap in her age and mine, I could have married the girl too!"

Raghav stopped. The king looked uncertain. The chief minister laughed and said, "Fine, fine! The old man has grown more and more clever! He proved cleverest during the present reign!"



Now the king too laughed. He gave Raghav a handsome reward. Raghav went away happily.

Outside the palace the chief minister told Raghav, "Naughty old man, don't take me to be a fool. I know what you meant!"

"What did I mean, noble minister?" asked Raghav feign-

ing innocence.

"People were truthful during the king's grandfather's reign. By the time of the king's father's reign, they had grown greedy. During the present king's reign, they are greedy as well as lustful. Your own supposed conduct reflects the people's character," said the minister.

Raghav smiled and kept quiet.

There was an old man of Darjeeling
Who travelled from London to Ealing
It said on the door,
'Please don't spit on the floor,'
So he carefully spat on the ceiling.

-Anon





*New Tales of King Vikram
and the Vampire*

THE STRANGE ACCUSATION

Dark was the night and fearful the atmosphere. Frequent showers were punctuated by fierce gusts of wind. Jackals howled and eerie laughter was heard. Flashes of lightning revealed ghastly faces.

But King Vikram swerved not. He climbed the tree again and brought the corpse down. Throwing the corpse astride on his shoulder, he then began to cross the desolate cremation ground.

Suddenly observed the vampire that possessed the corpse: "O King, most probably you have undertaken this task to serve the cause of one of your well-wishers. But you ought to remember that even a well-wisher might one day accuse you of treacherous and ungrateful conduct. Let me explain my point through an example. Listen to my story. That ought to bring you some relief."

The vampire went on: in a

certain village lived two friends, Vasudev and Padmanabh. The latter's wife died, leaving an infant son behind. Soon thereafter Padmanabh himself took to bed, struck by a fatal illness.

During Padmanabh's illness it was Vasudev's wife who looked after Padmanabh's infant son. She loved the child like her own son. The child could not have got any better treatment from its own mother. This gladdened Padmanabh on his sick-bed.

Before dying, Padmanabh told Vasudev, "I am leaving for my unknown destiny. Please take charge of my son, Ravi."

"Don't you worry, my friend, I promise to look upon Ravi as my own son," said Vasudev.

Padmanabh died. Vasudev proved true to his word. He nurtured Ravi along with his own son, Shekhar. He bestowed equal care on both the boys. In fact, Ravi often did not remember that he was not Shekhar's own brother.

In a few years Vasudev's wife died. Vasudev was deeply sad. But he did not show it. He devoted all his time to the welfare of the two boys. His relatives advised him to give up the bur-



den of Ravi as the boy had grown up. Vasudev gave no value to such advice. He remembered his promise to his dear departed friend, Padmanabh, and continued to bestow all affection on Ravi.

After the two boys completed their studies in the local school, Vasudev sent them to the town for further education. Shekhar was older than Ravi by a year. Naturally, Vasudev sent their monthly expenses to Shekhar.

It was unfortunate that Shekhar soon fell into bad company. He took to gambling and other vices. Ravi cautioned him,

but to no avail.

Ravi thought of informing Vasudev about the developments concerning Shekhar! But, on second thought, he refrained from doing so. After all, it was Shekhar who gave him his allowance. He did not like to displease him.

Once Ravi and Shekhar came home. Shekhar gave the impression to Vasudev that he was doing well in his studies and that all was fine! Ravi kept quiet.

Vasudev was happy.

The day the two boys were to return to the town, a stack of currency notes was found miss-



ing from Vasudev's box. The circumstance of the occurrence was such that none but one of the two boys could have stolen it. The boys were questioned. Instantly Shekhar pointed his finger at Ravi and said, "Ravi, you could have asked father for money instead of stealing! This is too bad!"

Ravi least expected such a remark. He was sure that Shekhar had stolen the money. He was about to give Shekhar away. But just then Shekhar said again, "Too bad, Ravi, too bad!"

Vasudev cast a stern look at Ravi. "I am sorry for you, Ravi. Keep the money since you need it. But I have lost all faith in you!" he blurted out.

The two youths were back in the town. Shekhar resumed his evil habits. One night he had a quarrel with a gambler in the latter's den. They took to fighting. A strong blow from Shekhar killed the gambler.

Shekhar was arrested. Vasudev was informed of the incident and he came rushing to the town. Only then he heard how Shekhar had gone astray for a long time. At the trial Ravi declared that Shekhar was with him at the time of the gambler's death. But the judge



did not accept the alibi. The proof that Shekhar had killed the gambler was overwhelming. The judge condemned Shekhar to a long term in prison.

People who knew that Ravi tried his best to save Shekhar were all praise for him. Ravi expected that Vasudev too would be pleased with him. But, as soon as they met, Vasudev burst out, "Don't show your face to me, you foe of a friend, you coward and treacherous fellow, you an enemy of the society! Alas, your crime is unpardonable!"

Vasudev returned to his village.

The vampire paused for a moment and then challenged King Vikram: "Is it not intriguing that Vasudev should get furious with Ravi? Was Ravi not a gentle youth who never liked to disrupt his relation with Shekhar and calmly bore with Shekhar's conduct? Did he not try to save Shekhar from punishment? How can Vasudev's strange accusation be justified? Answer me, O King, if you can. If you keep mum despite your knowledge of the answer, your head would roll off your shoulders."

Forthwith answered King Vikram: "Vasudev's wrath was entirely justified. Each epithet he used was rightly applicable to Ravi. Had Ravi been a true well-wisher of Shekhar, he would have brought his fall to Vasudev's notice. He ought to

have done so at least when he himself failed to mend Shekhar's ways. He kept quiet because the string of his purse remained in Shekhar's hand. By allowing his friend to go astray, he proved himself his foe. He knew that it was Shekhar who had stolen Vasudev's money. His silence was the sign of his cowardice. It was in a sense treachery too, for he dishonoured the faith which Vasudev had reposed in him. His false statement before the judge showed that he did not hesitate to mislead the course of justice. Law and justice are some of the pillars on which the society rests. By speaking a lie in the court, he proved himself an enemy of the society."

No sooner had the king concluded his answer than the vampire, along with the corpse, gave him the slip!



MUST BEAR WITH THEM!

There were two friends — Samir and Keshav. They had two servants, Bhola and Babu, well-known for their naivety.

"I am yet to see a greater fool than Bhola," said Samir.

"My servant Babu will surpass yours, I bet," said Keshav.

The two friends summoned Bhola and Babu.

"Will you go to the bazar and buy a diamond ring for me?" Samir asked Bhola, giving him one paisa.

"I shall fetch it at once," promised Bhola. He received the paisa and went out.

"Will you go to the garden and check whether I am there or not?" Keshav asked Babu.

"I shall check instantly," said Babu, going out.

As the two friends were laughing over their servants' naivety, a passer-by heard Bhola and Babu talking on the road:

"My master is a fool. He does not remember that today being a Sunday, I cannot buy a diamond ring for him," observed Bhola.

"Is my master a lesser fool? Is it not the gardener who should know better whether he is in the garden or not? Why ask me?" observed Babu.

"Well, well, we must bear with them," both Bhola and Babu commented at last.





THE SCOOP THAT FAILED

Mahi loved to speak of things which others did not know. He derived great pleasure from giving surprise to the people of his village.

"I am afraid, a tiger or leopard has come to live in the bushes on the river," once he announced. At first at least some people got panicky. But their enquiry soon showed that Mahi had never seen any such beast. All that had happened was, he had heard a rustling sound in the bushes. He had also seen a jackal running away. Hence he had concluded that a tiger or a jackal must have arrived.

But news that would be startling to all were not available

in plenty. Mahi began concocting some and exaggerating some more. Naturally a time came when nobody was prepared to believe him. They laughed at whatever he said.

This saddened him. He would take pains to give them interesting news and his audience would just laugh them away! That was too much.

"Very well, I shall look forward to pass on some such news that would be sensational and true at the same time," he decided in his mind.

Once a dispute arose between two groups of the villagers. The landlord of Narainpur was well known as an impartial judge. Representatives of both

the groups met him and requested him to pay a visit to their village. The landlord conceded their request.

On the appointed day the villagers gathered under a banian tree and waited to receive the landlord. But the landlord did not turn up on time. In this Mahi saw his chance to recover his lost reputation. "I must rush to Narainpur and find out what has detained the landlord. There must be something unusual to make him give up an appointment. I will then be the first man to inform my villagers what it is."

He jogged on towards Narainpur.

Right outside Narainpur he saw a procession carrying a corpse to the cremation ground.

"From the size of the crowd it is obvious that the dead one was no ordinary man!" he observed before a passer-by.

"He was no ordinary man!" said the passer-by who sported a gold-mounted tooth.

"He must have been a famous man. By the way, who happened to be the famous man in this village?" he asked the gold-toothed man.

"The landlord, of course," was



the reply.

Mahi never expected to hit upon such a scoop! He praised himself for his enterprise and pitied his village-folks. "They are waiting for a dead man!" he muttered as he laughed.

He returned to his village at redoubled speed.

"In vain do you sit here. The landlord of Narainpur is no more!" he informed the gathering under the banian tree, gasping and sweating.

"Nonsense!" commented someone.

"Nonsense? Did I not see the dead landlord myself?" demanded Mahi.

"Did you know the living landlord to know him dead?" asked somebody.

Mahi fumbled. "Wait," he shouted, "I'll presently call a witness from Narainpur! You people are just an impossible lot!"

He had not gone far when he ran into a gentleman.

"Are you by any chance from Narainpur?" he queried.

"I am," said the gentleman.

"That is fine. Will you please convince those queer fellows yonder that your landlord was no more?" Mahi pleaded with the gentleman.

"I'm afraid, I won't be able to convince them!" said the gentleman.

"Why not?" demanded Mahi.

"Because they know me and they will recognise me as the landlord," said the gentleman.

Mahi stood speechless for a

moment. On the verge of weeping he then recounted his experience to the landlord.

The landlord laughed and said, "My boy, we have a fellow in our village—the gold-toothed one—who is as mischievous as you are naive. You should have asked him the identity of the man who died. Instead, you asked him who was the famous man in Narainpur. He answered you correctly, though mischievously, that the landlord was the famous man!"

"But these villagers will laugh at me!" murmured Mahi.

The landlord patted Mahi on the back and said, "Sonny, it is always wise to talk less and avoid speaking useless things."

Mahi nodded. He gave up spreading sensational news. Years passed. No more did the villagers laugh at him.



RANI LAKSHMIBAI

It was the year 1857. Life in the old good town of Jhansi had come to a standstill. The atmosphere throbbed with suspense. Everybody felt that something terrible was going to happen. And most of them thought that they knew what is that: their ancient kingdom was going to fall into the hands of foreigners—the men of the East India Company. A large army of the Company was camping

along the border of the town.

Naturally, they were awe-struck at what they saw one June morning. Thousands of soldiers from the fort burst out into the streets. They were shouting, "Victory to Rani Lakshmibai!" "Long live our mother, Lakshmibai!"

The proud British army, which had taken its triumph for granted, was taken aback. It took some time to understand





that far from submitting to its demand, the young Rani of Jhansi had decided to meet it with arms.

Booming of guns, hissing sound of arrows, frequent cries of joy and anguish and dazzling swords raised high—were all that the people of the town heard and witnessed for some hours. Then all was quiet. Moments later, from the triumphal return of their own forces into the fort, they realised that the British army had been routed. The enemy's audacity and arrogance had been suitably rebuffed. The whole kingdom went festive.

What was the demand of the Company? Why was its army camping at Jhansi? Jhansi was an independent state. The Raja, Gangadhar Rao, died untimely, leaving no child of his own. But he had adopted a son who was his legal heir.

The Rani, Lakshmibai, was in her early twenties then. But she was extraordinary in every respect. In fact, it was because she was extraordinary that the royal priest had arranged for her marriage with the prince. She was a commoner's daughter. Her childhood name was Manikarnika.

After her husband's death, the young Rani ruled the kingdom in an ideal way. The subjects were very happy with her. Peace and prosperity marked her rule.

The British in India were then looking for every chance to grab at the native territories. They made an arbitrary decision that any Raja who would die childless would forfeit his kingdom to them.

It was an age-old custom in India to look upon an adopted son as equal to one's own son. The men of the Company knew it, but because it went against their interest, they did not accept

it as a valid custom. What right they had to pass judgment on an Indian custom as valid or invalid? They knew very well that they had no such right. But they had might. That was all that mattered to them.

As you already know, 1857 was the year when the 1st Indian War of Independence, popularly known as the Sepoy Mutiny, had broken out. Rani Lakshmibai saw in the situation an opportunity to unite the other rulers of the country. She knew that a fight fought jointly will pack the East India Company off to its land beyond

the seas.

Sir Hugh Rose, a famed British General, was entrusted with the task of tackling Jhansi. He advanced upon the tiny state with an army that was large enough to fight an empire and made up of choice regiments. But the army of the Rani, under her direct command, kept the enemy at bay for days together. Nana Sahib had sent word that he will be coming to her aid. He was on his way. Had he reached on time, the enemy would have got sandwiched with pressures from inside and outside the town.





That would have routed them again.

But, as luck would have it, Nana Sahib's march was delayed. Sir Huge Rose, in his anxiety about his own fate, led his army in a desperate thrust into the fort. Through continuous effort, they had managed to bribe some fellows and know from them where the Rani's ammunition store lay. They exploded it by shooting numerous fire-balls at it.

When the Rani knew that it would not be possible to hold on to the fort, she made a daring escape, almost cutting through the surrounding enemy. Her

adopted son—an infant—was tied to her back. With one hand she held the rein of her horse; the other hand wielded the sword.

The British army captured Jhansi, but in two fierce battles the Rani fought at Mauranipur and Barwasagar, the British were badly defeated. The Rani became a legend in a short time. She was mobilising rapid support from the native chiefs. Rulers of Banpur, Shahgarh and Bundelkhand joined her. By her valour, intelligence and personality she became the greatest leader of the rebellion.

For the British she became the most formidable terror. They realised that their prestige will be levelled to dust if they could not put an end to the Rani. They met her with ever greater force. Each time the battle between the Rani and the British was growing fiercer. The British had announced tempting rewards for those who would be able to capture the Rani—alive or dead! Even if they got her dead, they would vaunt her corpse as their prize trophy.

The Rani had reached Gwalior. The ruler of Gwalior, an ally of the British, had fled

and the fort had fallen to the Rani. She was now supported by yet another hero of the great mutiny—Tantia Tope.

It was a day of bloody battle. The Rani had been in the front right from the morning, fighting in person and inspiring her tired soldiers to go on in their arduous task. Towards evening she was grievously wounded. From the nature of the wound she knew that she could not survive it. She retreated into a grove. Within an hour she died, after instructing her escorts to burn her body as soon as possible. The instruction was

faithfully carried out.

Soon the British came to know that the Rani was no more. They were hardly happy. The Rani had inflicted enough humiliation on them for them to keep sulking forever. Secondly, they could not get her deadbody to gloat over it.

The noble and valiant Rani of Jhansi is treasured in the memory of India. She shall never be forgotten. On the spot where she breathed her last, now known as Phool Bagh, stands a monument in her honour.





THE SAGA OF SHIVA

Once there was no rain on the earth for a very long time. Thousands of people died. The severity of the drought reduced the earth to great misery.

Brahma the Creator realised that a great ruler was what the world needed. He must be wise and pure. He must rule with justice and compassion.

He called a descendant of Manu and asked him to take up the burden of managing the earth.

Manu's descendant said, I can rule men well and bring order back to the earth and Nature, provided there is no interference in my work from the gods or the beings of the nether-world. Let them withdraw into their own spheres. They will not understand my laws and create confusion.

Brahma decided to give his

devotee a chance to do as he liked. The devotee assumed the name Dibodas and chose Kasi for his capital. Kasi was the seat of Lord Viswanath. Around the great God, who was a manifestation of Lord Shiva, lived numerous gods as well as supernatural beings. Dibodas made Brahma request Shiva to withdraw from Kasi. Shiva agreed to do so. Consequently the other gods as well as the supernatural beings left Kasi too.

Dibodas went over to Kasi and began an ideal rule. All were pleased with him. When the human beings behaved well, Nature also grew kind to them. Seasons ran according to their cycle. There was plenty of rain. It resulted in healthy crop growing all over the domain of King Dibodas.

But the gods who had been obliged to retire from the earth were eager to return. They conspired among themselves and inspired the god of fire and the god of wind to withhold their powers. The result was, fire could not be lighted on the earth; no breeze moved along it. This meant crisis. Soon, the god of rain too become a party to the conspiracy of the gods. Clouds disappeared from the sky. There was no rain.

Crowds collected before the palace of Dibodas and shouted out their anguish to their king. The king appealed to them to have patience. "I shall presently sit in meditation and try to know the cause of the crisis. But be on your guard. Never give yourself up to any temptation; don't you do anything that is unworthy of the ideal men.

Gods were busy doing everything possible to disrupt the life of human beings. The city of Kasi was their main target. They sent batches of supernatural beings to achieve their purpose. But such was the charm of Kasi that all those who came there never went back. King Dibodas was a great soul. His spiritual power



protected the city in spite of all the problems.

Shiva Himself missed Kasi no less than the others. He sent an army of His servants who were spirits of many kinds to sing His glory while mingling with the people of Kasi. Thereby, He thought, the people of Kasi would long to have Him back in their city. But, once in Kasi, Shiva's servants, instead of singing their master's glory, began singing the glory of Kasi. They even forgot to report back to Shiva.

Shiva was intrigued. He told Brahma, "It is surprising that whoever goes to Kasi does not



care to come back. Will you visit the city yourself and resolve its mystery?"

Brahma went to Kasi—but only to stay on there.

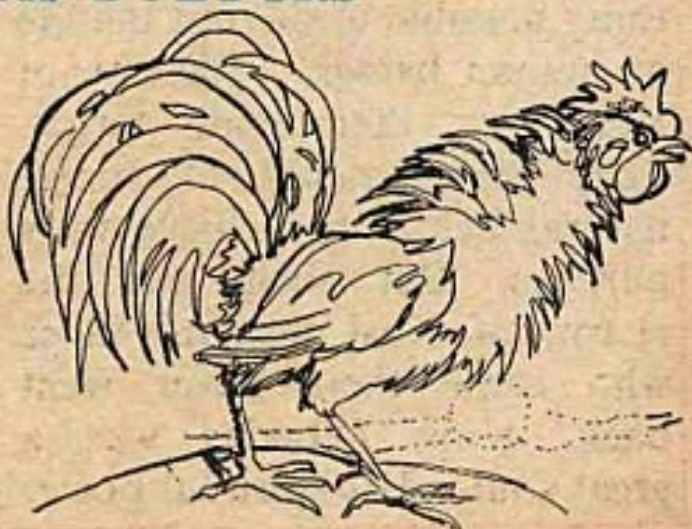
In the meanwhile King Dibodas in his meditation under-

stood that unless men and gods mingled, men will never grow beyond their animal-self, and gods will be deprived of the joys of the human world. The gods loved men and men adored the gods. This was necessary for the Divine Play. Behind every element of Nature there was a god as its presiding deity. With this new realisation Dibodas invoked the Grace of Lord Shiva and prayed to him to return to Kasi. His prayer was granted. As Shiva returned, all the other gods returned too. Those who were already there shed their disguise and lived freely.

Dibodas was growing old. He passed on his crown to his son and retired to mount Kailash.

Kasi was again a city of peace, prosperity and piety.

WONDER WITH COLOURS



What Difference?

Jaivir was a wealthy man. However, he did not like to spend much for himself. This does not mean that he liked to spend for others!

It was a festive day. Jaivir was going out into the village in his old tattered clothes.

"My master, should you not put on a new set of clothes today?" asked his lone servant.

"Why should I? Who does not know me in the village? What difference will it make whether I wear old or new?" he replied with a counter-question.

Next week Jaivir was going out to the town—still in his old clothes.

"Master, should you not dress decently now that you are going to the town?" asked the servant.

"Why should I, you fool? Who knows me in the town? What difference will it make?" asked Jaivir.





THE TWO SIDES OF COURAGE

Rudrapratap, the king of Vaishali, had only one child—a girl. Since she was to succeed him to the throne, the king trained her in administration as well as military skill.

It was time for the princess to marry. "I should find out a bridegroom who can surpass my daughter in strength and skill. No enemy would then dare invade her kingdom," the king thought. Then he announced a date for all the princes of the region to assemble for their trial of skill with the princess.

Among those who came were two tribal princes. The king did not wish any of the two to marry his daughter. At the same time he could not refuse them their rights to participate in the contest.

But all the princes, other than the tribal ones, were

defeated by the princess. The king was obliged to call upon the tribal princes to come forward for the contest.

The one to fight first was Virmalla. He defeated the princess in riding, fencing and all other contests. Then he demanded that the king announce his right to marry the princess.

But the other tribal prince, Nagmalla, stepped forward.

"How can the king make such an announcement until I too had been tried?" he demanded.

"Quite right. Let there be a contest between you and Virmalla," suggested the king. He wanted to avoid both. In a fight between Virmalla and Nagmalla, if Virmalla was defeated, he would get rid of him. Nagmalla's demand to marry the princess can be turned down

under the plea that he had not fought with the princess!

But his plan did not work out. Virmalla refused to enter a contest with Nagmalla, saying, "I was here to try my strength and skill with the princess. I have done that. Why should I misuse my talents fighting Nagmalla?"

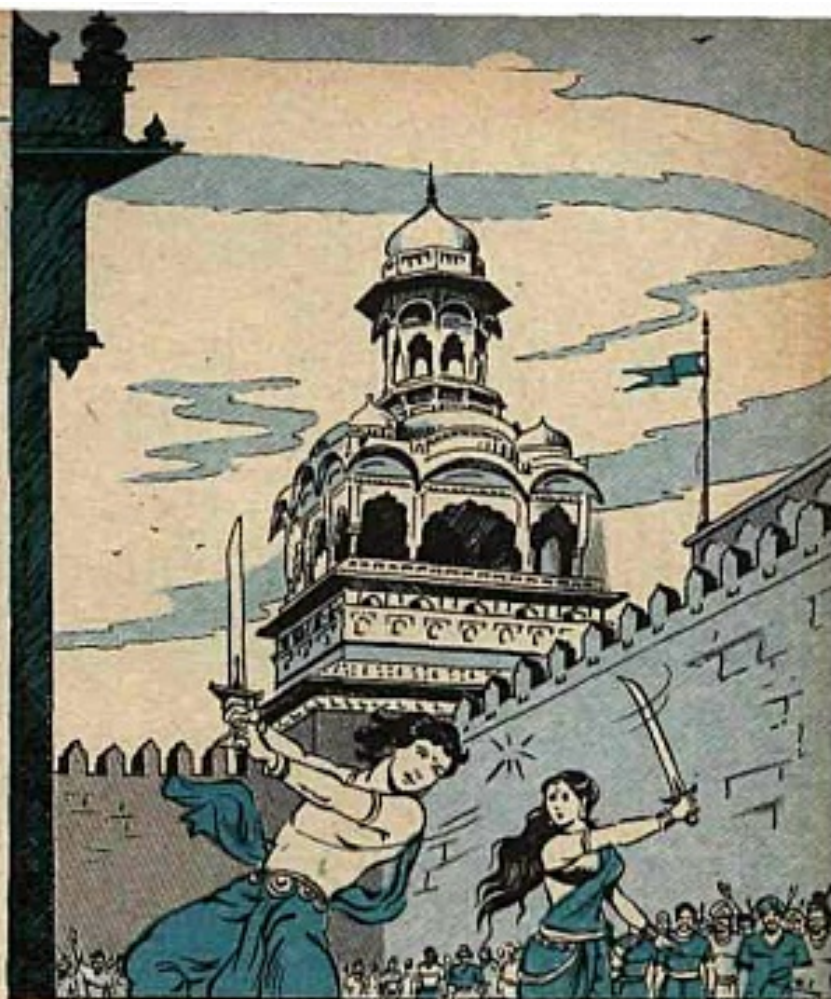
The assembled guests supported Virmalla's stand.

The king had to let Nagmalla fight with the princess. It so happened that Nagmalla too defeated the princess.

"Now that two of you have defeated the princess, I am in a dilemma. The princess cannot marry two. Hence the results of the entire contest stand cancelled," declared the king.

"It ought not to be so," said the guests, "Who does not know that the princess can marry only one? We are here to participate in the celebration of the marriage. It would be rude on your part to render our visit futile. Let the princess choose any of the two winners. That should bring the episode to its logical end."

The king did not know what to do. He pleaded for time. The guests agreed to wait till the next day.



At night Virmalla met the king in private and revealed that he was not a tribal prince. He was the son of the king of Kuntal. He had assumed a false identity to protect himself from humiliation in case the princess defeated him.

"If you do not wish your daughter to wed a tribal chap, please tell her to choose me tomorrow," he suggested.

The king was happy that Virmalla was the prince of Kuntal. He briefed his daughter accordingly.

In the morning it was announced that the princess will publicly garland the prince of her



choice. Virmalla and Nagmalla stood in the forefront of the assembly of royal guests. To the amazement of Virmalla as well as the king, the princess garlanded Nagmalla.

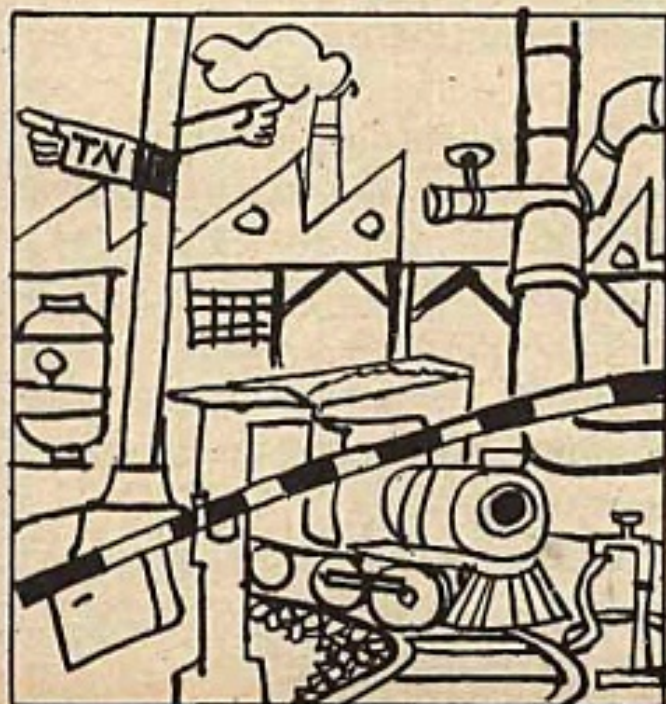
"Father, I could not have chosen Virmalla, a coward," she confided to the king.

"How do you call a prince

who excelled you in strength and skill a coward?" asked the intrigued king.

"Father, courage is not to be recognised in strength and skill alone. Had Virmalla been endowed with moral courage, he would not have kept his identity hidden," said the princess to her father's satisfaction.

SPOT THE TEN DIFFERENCES



*A mission to fulfil father's ambition
—to redeem his debt of gratitude*



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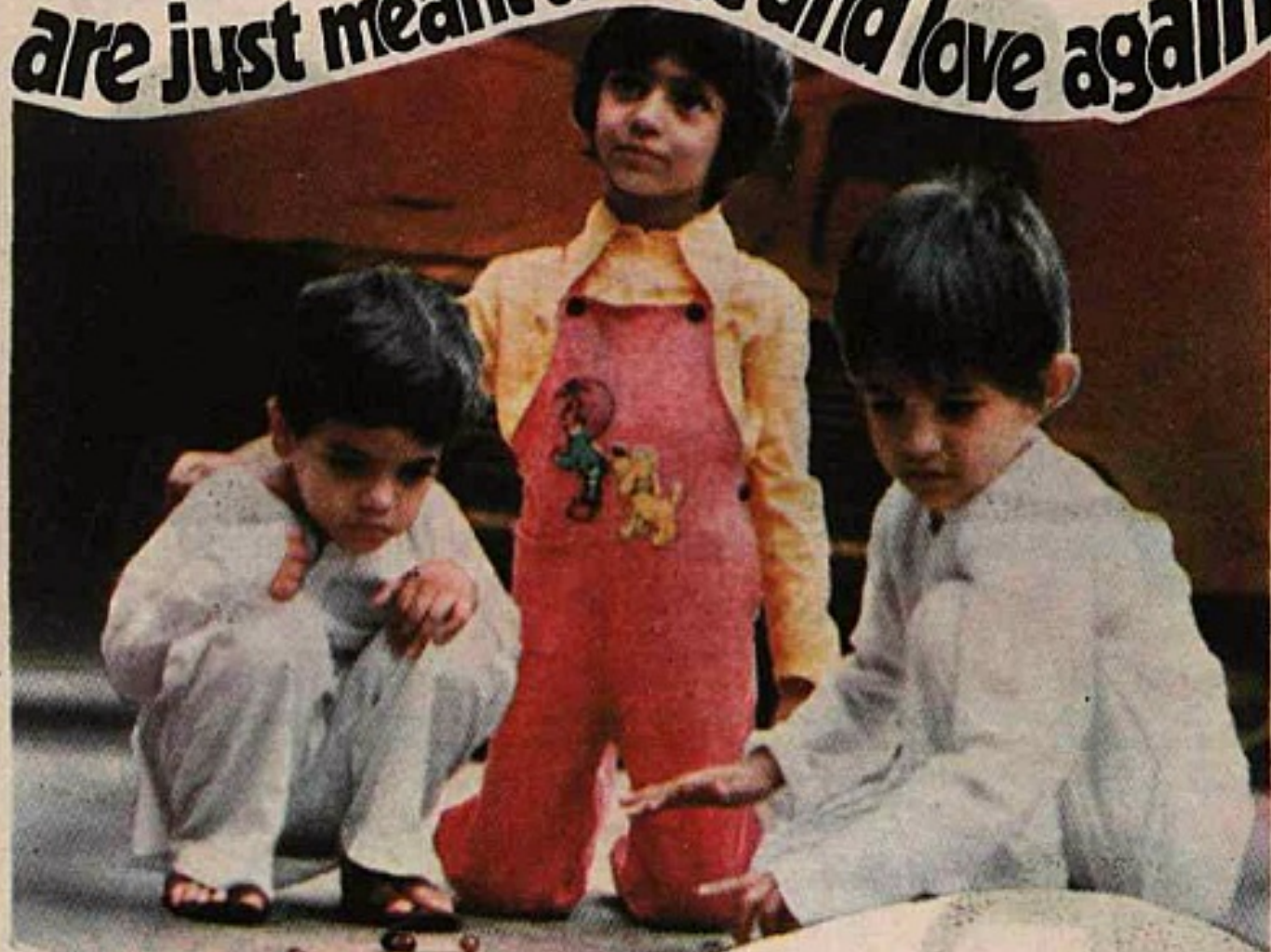


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